1935

*Looking Forward*

Twenty-first Annual Report

of the

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.

50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

1935

# Looking Forward

HOPE for the future is inspired by the fulfillment of the past. As each step is taken, it is difficult to measure the advance toward the goal, but after a year of activity the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness is definitely aware of going forward on its journey.

In "A Decade's Advance in Ophthalmology," Dr. William H. Wilmer, a leader in sight conservation for many years, wrote:

"The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness has done splendid work not only in the prevention of blindness, but in aiding those with defective vision. Its enthusiasm has stimulated the imagination and devotion of educators, social workers, and all lovers of humanity. Among the many phases of this association's fine work may be mentioned the promotion of sight-saving classes, in which children with very defective vision may still get a full, normal education without injury to the eyes and without strain upon their physical and nervous systems. Their remaining sight is conserved and they are assisted in selecting suitable occupations. In the United States, these classes have grown in number from 260 in 1925 to 476 in 1935, with an enrollment of 6,000 girls and boys. This represents an increase of 80 per cent in the last decade—during a period when, particularly of late, there has been a diminishing education budget."

The Society looks forward to continuing projects already initiated and to beginning new ones. To those engaged in the work of sight conservation, the accomplishment of the past promises an ever-decreasing number of needlessly blind. Scientific advances and public education encourage us to look forward to the time when there will be no preventable blindness. The Society's 20,000 members and donors are helping to make this possible; to them the countless number who might otherwise have become blind are immeasurably indebted.

# A Résumé of 1935

## Community Enterprise in Saving Sight

Eye health—vision conservation—prevention of blindness—are no longer isolated phrases in the lexicon of health movements and social and educational groups.

The increasing number of groups who seek to include the subject of prevention of blindness in their programs is convincing proof of the effectiveness of the Society's work. At the request of local groups, representatives of the Society's staff visited 82 cities in 26 states, to present various aspects of sight conservation. Twelve communities received help from the Society in developing and incorporating sight conservation activities in their programs. Two state commissions for the blind requested and received assistance in formulating preventive programs in their respective states. The Society has granted scholarships for training in prevention of blindness work for the field nurses appointed to direct the work in these two states.

In an effort to stimulate a popular interest in eye hygiene, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers asked the Society to provide a special pamphlet for distribution among its 7,000 local parent-teacher organizations. As a result, a number of the local leaders availed themselves of the Society's films, exhibits, and other services.

Nine cities planning to establish Better Light-Better Sight campaigns called upon the Society for assistance and advice. Though these campaigns are sponsored by the electric, paint, and optical industries, they are receiving the co-operation of medical and educational authorities in the cities in which they have been established. The Society has responded to requests for suggestions on the part of the local groups. At the request of the National Better Light-Better Sight Bureau, it outlined a program which was adopted and will be distributed by the Bureau some time early in 1936.

**Exhibits.**—A review of the year discloses an increasing demand for public education in matters of eye health. Requests for exhibit material ranging from posters to prepared displays and loans of permanent exhibit units came from 101 sources—from groups as far away as Porto Rico, Brazil, Honolulu, and Tokyo. Among the organizations which have made use of the Society's educational material are the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the National Negro Health Movement, the National Education Association, the National Baptist Convention of America, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the National Safety Council.

The usefulness of these exhibits may be judged from the following comment by a representative of a public health council:

"The exhibit made such a strong impression upon our school authorities that they have requested its use in the schools throughout the year. We are rebuilding the exhibit into six compact, portable units, so that each exhibit will remain in one of our six intermediate or junior high schools. Physicians will demonstrate these exhibits to pupils and teachers, then the two full-time health teachers in each school will continue to use each exhibit for a period of three weeks for teaching purposes. After each three weeks there will be a shift in the exhibits, until each exhibit has made the rounds."

There were 57 communities for whom 86 mounted displays were prepared and to whom 30 permanent exhibit units were loaned. In addition, requests were filled from 36 other communities for publications and posters to display during local conferences.

**Films.**—The film, "Preventing Blindness and Saving Sight," continues to grow in popularity. The Society has 22 prints of the film, of which 16 are on permanent loan. The following localities have had films on loan for a year or more: Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington, as well as Brazil, Cuba, Hawaii, Japan, and the National Negro Health Movement. The six remaining prints were circulated directly from the office of the Society to meet individual requests. While less than one-half of those who have borrowed films have sent in reports, the record of 522 showings before an aggregate audience of 40,000 would indicate an estimated total audience well above 100,000. Though the So-

ciety has added four prints to its supply during the past year, more than twice the available number are needed to meet the requests for them.

**Publications.**—The number of subscribers to the *Sight-Saving Review*, the Society's quarterly magazine, has doubled in the past year. Reprints from the *Review*, as well as other publications, provide up-to-date information on eye care and sight conservation; 225,000 pamphlets were distributed. One number of the *Review* was devoted to the proceedings of the 1934 annual conference. The subjects presented were "Contribution of Statistics to the Prevention of Blindness," "Eliminating Fireworks Accidents," and "Symposium on Prenatal and Congenital Infections in Relation to Blindness and Impaired Vision." This issue was distributed not only to subscribers, but also to those who attended and participated in the meetings.

The *Sight-Saving Class Exchange* was published four times during the year, and was circularized among sight-saving class teachers and supervisors, and other interested persons.

**Public Information.**—During the year 1,381 news articles and editorials on sight conservation appeared in newspapers and periodicals throughout the country as a result of 21 press releases issued by the Society.

Through the co-operation of the Medical Information Bureau of the New York Academy of Medicine, as well as other local groups, the Society continued its radio campaign. Nine broadcasts were given by staff members over stations in New York City, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana, and Dallas, Texas. As a result of a nationwide hookup, 189 communications were received from 31 states, the District of Columbia, and British Columbia, Canada.

**Personal Queries.**—Although the Society does not include case work in its program, hundreds of inquiries about personal eye health problems are received. Through its nationwide contacts the Society is able to put such correspondents in touch with local services that will be helpful, at the same time sending such general information and advice as can be safely offered through correspondence. The following are typical questions on which information has been sought.

# FIRST AID FOR EYE INJURIES

## SHOULD BE GIVEN BY DOCTORS AND NURSES ▲▲ NOT BY AMATEURS

Thousands of eyes have been lost because of infections resulting from amateurish first aid ▲▲

Most of these eyes would have been saved by prompt first aid rendered by a doctor or trained nurse ▲

**NATIONAL SOCIETY *for the* PREVENTION *of* BLINDNESS**

50·WEST·50 ST · · NEW YORK CITY

Reproduction of One of the Society's Posters

Where may I obtain free or low-cost treatment for my eyes?

If I don't feel improvement after wearing glasses, shall I discard them?

I was cross-eyed as a child but outgrew it. Will my three-year-old daughter also outgrow this condition as she grows older or does she need medical attention?

What shall I do about my baby who has congenital cataract?

How can I arrange for an operation for squint if I cannot afford to pay for it?

My fiancé has glaucoma—prognosis unfavorable—shall I tell him?

My child has difficulty in reading. May this be a result of defective vision?

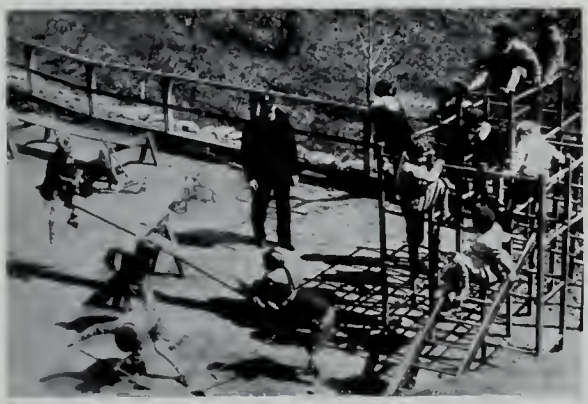
What shall I do about my daughter aged sixteen who has styes frequently?

## Conserving the Sight of School Children

The importance of utilizing the teacher training centers for promoting sight conservation among school children has long been recognized. Thus far, through the co-operation of the Society, four teacher training centers—two in Kentucky and one each in Indiana and New York—have included eye health in their courses. Plans are under way for the organization of a national advisory committee on eye health in teachers colleges. It is expected that a permanent committee will be appointed during the meeting of the National Education Association early in 1936.

"Conserving the Sight of School Children," which was revised late last year, has been widely distributed to teachers, school nurses, and school physicians.

In the past ten years the Society has sponsored or co-operated in 33 courses for the training of sight-saving class teachers. Approximately 530 teachers have received training during this period. This year the Society co-operated in three summer-session courses for the training of sight-saving class teachers—in Buffalo, New York, Cleveland, Ohio, and Teachers College, Columbia University, New York—with a total enrollment of 83 students. So great has been the demand for trained sight-saving class teachers, that Columbia University incorporated in its regular winter session a



Safe play under supervision.

# Play Safe

Bang! Will another eye be lost?

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc. 50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

Reproduction of One of the Society's Posters

course for such training, which is now offered as a part of the regular graduate work. The number of sight-saving classes has increased from 458 in 1934 to 476 in 1935. In New York State alone, where a supervisor was appointed, five new classes were established in the fall.

In order to determine the need for the *Sight-Saving Class Exchange*, a poll was taken of sight-saving class teachers and supervisors, who responded almost unanimously in favor of its continuance. The *Exchange* depends largely upon the co-operation of the sight-saving class teachers in providing material for an exchange of ideas.

The Society had the opportunity of presenting before the Section of Ophthalmology of the New York Academy of Medicine a paper on "Sight-Saving Classes," by Conrad Berens, M. D., and Winifred Hathaway. This paper was subsequently published in the *American Journal of Ophthalmology* and reprints were distributed among physicians, sight-saving class teachers, and others interested in the development of sight-saving class work.

## Preventing Injuries to the Eyes

**Industrial Hazards.**—The Society continued to act as a clearing house on industrial eye protection by co-operating with safety engineers, industrial physicians, educators, and others concerned with hazards to the eyes of workers in various occupations. The need for proper eye protection was emphasized at meetings attended by thousands of delegates during the sessions of the Greater New York Safety Conference, the First Annual Virginia State-wide Safety Conference, the All Western Safety Conference, and the Maine Safety Conference, as well as Institutes on Conservation of Vision held in Rochester, New York, Honolulu, and other places.

**Safety Glass.**—The Society has long recognized the danger to the eyes of the use of ordinary glass in automobiles and has continued its educational campaign for the use of safety glass. Thus far, 23 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws making mandatory the use of safety glass in all motor vehicles. In some of these states the law goes into effect January 1, 1936.

# Eyes Saved

## thanks to goggles

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc. 50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

Reproduction of One of the Society's Posters

Photographs, courtesy of General Electric Co.

**Fourth-of-July Accidents.**—So important has the problem of Independence Day accidents become that the American Pyrotechnic Industries made an appropriation of $2,500 to the American Museum of Safety for a study of accidents resulting from fireworks. Dr. Leland E. Cofer was appointed chairman and, with the assistance of the Society's director of industrial relations, made the study by assembling and analyzing newspaper clippings of injuries and checking the accuracy of newspaper accounts through interview and letters. The findings were presented formally before one of the meetings of the 1935 annual conference of the Society. It was disclosed that 7,738 were injured and at least 30 persons were killed celebrating July 4, 1935. Of the 3,000 cases in which it was possible to obtain first-hand information by means of a carefully prepared questionnaire or by personal visits, 214 had eye injuries, of which 104 were serious. These figures testify to the need for an unremitting campaign against the indiscriminate use of harmful fireworks. As a result of the Society's efforts, the governors of a number of states issued proclamations for a safe and sane Fourth-of-July; 21 cities and 14 states presented the subject of safe celebration before 106 clubs or groups; and scores of newspaper editorials decried the public indifference to this danger.

## Summary of Other Activities

**Nursing Activities.**—Through the leadership of the Society, round-table meetings for public health nurses were held in 12 cities in the middle west—Little Rock, Arkansas; Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Sioux City, Iowa; Cleveland, Ohio; Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and Watertown, South Dakota; Nashville, Tennessee; and Ogden and Richfield, Utah. The subjects under discussion were sight conservation as a community problem; sight conservation in a generalized health program; and sight conservation in the school system. The Society hopes to follow, more and more, the institute method and to work with public health nurses in the schools throughout the country.

**Medical Social Eye Work.**—The need for medical social eye work, especially in cases where long and continued treatment is required, is readily acknowledged by physicians, hospitals, and all

# EDITORIAL COMMENDATION

Typical of the sympathetic attitude of the press toward the movement for prevention of blindness

## Preventing Blindness

Scores of envelopes carrying first class postage are dumped from the mail bag to the editorial desk every day. Many of these —most, in fact—contain propaganda literature for this, that and the other. Individuals and organizations are busy trying to command the attention of the newspapers in the hope that some of their ideas will find their way into print. Some of them succeed but many fail for the simple reason that much of this propaganda matter serves no purpose other than the selfish interests of those originating it and has neither news nor feature value to give it claim upon editorial attention. We have often thought if the money spent for postage by these publicity seekers could be turned into a fund for some worthy charity, the world would be much better off.

There is at least one organization, however, whose bulletins come along now and again and in this office at least, are always read. These are the modest announcements of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. Here is a work that is eminently worth while and through which unlimited good has been accomplished in every part of the country. It is, perhaps, trite to say that blindness is one of the saddest afflictions with which mankind has to contend, yet this is absolutely true. Well directed efforts to prevent this handicap should hold public interest, and as we follow the bulletins sent out by the National society which is engaged in this work we are edified, often astounded.

A December bulletin is before us. It is

*South Bend (Ind.) News-Times*
Sunday, December 29, 1935

having some relationship to the patient. The Society acts as a clearing house for the exchange of information and experiences among those affiliated in the work. Further, it acts as a secretariat for the Committee of Medical Social Workers, and in this capacity publishes a bulletin for the Committee. Two numbers of the bulletin were issued during the year.

One disease affecting the eye, requiring long and patient doctoring, is syphilis. The medical social eye aspects in such cases were thoroughly considered during the National Conference of Social Work, in Montreal. Dr. S. Hanford McKee, clinical professor of ophthalmology, McGill University, Montreal, discussed "Eye Complications in Syphilis"; Miss Lydia B. Christ, medical social worker and instructor, Minnesota General Hospital, Minneapolis, spoke on "What Can the Social Worker in a Syphilis Department Do to Prevent Loss of Sight"; Miss Jeanne Wertheimer, head social worker, Institute of Ophthalmology, Presbyterian Hospital, New York City, closed the meeting with the subject, "In What Social Area Can an Eye Worker Achieve Her Best Results with Syphilitic Patients."

A full day of the Society's annual conference was devoted to Medical Social Work in the Prevention of Blindness. Among the participants were medical and social work representatives from some of the most prominent hospitals in the United States. The Society will, through the Committee of Medical Social Eye Workers, distribute the proceedings of these meetings among directors of hospitals and clinics, as well as among social workers.

Continuing the plans for preparing medical social workers for eye service, the Society granted scholarships to three students who were given training at the Washington University Clinics and Allied Hospitals, St. Louis, Missouri, preparatory to taking up special activities in this field.

**Statistics of the Blind.**—At the annual session of the American Medical Association, Dr. Conrad Berens presented a paper on "Causes of Blindness Among Children," based on a study of 2,702 children in schools and classes for the blind, made by the Committee on Statistics of the Blind. The American Foundation for the Blind and the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness are joint sponsors of this Committee. The Committee is now

making annual tabulations of blindness among children, and hopes to make similar studies of the adult blind.

**Syphilis and Ophthalmia Neonatorum.**—Recognizing the danger of eye involvements among those afflicted with syphilis, the Society has continued its educational campaign for a routine blood test for every expectant mother. Its publication on this subject, "Safe and Sound," has been circularized extensively. The Society expects to have for distribution within a short time another pamphlet on the subject of syphilis in pregnancy. During the year, it participated in the Regional Conference on Social Hygiene in New York City. In addition, assistance was given to the Social Hygiene Committee of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association in the planning of a study of eye cases in which syphilis is involved.

The data on causes of blindness among new pupils in schools for the blind are not all in but preliminary figures indicate that the percentage due to ophthalmia neonatorum which had gone up to 8.2 in 1934, has dropped down to 7.4 this year.

**Annual Conference.**—Men and women from various sections of the United States whose daily work is concerned with the safeguarding of eyesight, attended the three-day annual conference of the Society at headquarters in Rockefeller Center, December 5, 6, and 7. Among those participating were doctors, nurses, social work executives, government officials, safety experts, and others whose work relates to sight conservation. Proceedings will be published as a supplement of the *Sight-Saving Review.*

## In Memoriam, 1935

Miss Jane Addams, honorary vice-president.

Dr. Colman W. Cutler, medical consultant and member of the Board of Directors.

Dr. Frank Allport, member of the Advisory Committee.

Dr. William H. Wilder, member of the Advisory Committee.

# Summary of Finances

## I. Statement of General Fund Income and Expenses for the Year Ended December 31, 1935

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | |
| Donations | | |
| New | $8,953.74 | |
| Renewal | 62,568.33 | $71,522.07 |
| Memberships | | |
| New | 902.80 | |
| Renewal | 13,261.10 | 14,163.90 |
| Subscriptions to magazine—"Sight-Saving Review" | | 698.06 |
| Sale of publications | | 1,550.84 |
| Return on service and travel | | 1,110.00 |
| Interest and dividends from Reserve and Endowment Fund assets | | 12,931.71 |
| Share of income from undistributed principal assets of Wendel Estate | | 6,875.00 |
| *Total Income* | | $108,851.58 |
| Balance on hand December 31, 1934 | | 34,300.58 |
| Transferred from Reserve Fund | | 22,000.00 |
| *Total* | | $165,152.16 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Expenses** | | |
| Administration | $36,890.27 | |
| Education and public information | 36,626.31 | |
| Field service | 11,730.49 | |
| Editorial research | 9,215.42 | |
| Publications | 11,977.07 | |
| Extension | 12,964.56 | |
| Collection of legacies | 157.64 | |
| Co-operative projects | 14,318.17 | $133,879.93 |
| Balance, December 31, 1935 | | 31,272.23 |
| *Total* | | $165,152.16 |

## II. Statement of Financial Condition, December 31, 1935

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **General Fund** | | |
| *Assets* | | |
| Cash | | $31,957.28 |
| Accrued interest receivable | $1,232.09 | |
| Less:—Reserve for accrued interest | 1,232.09 | .. |
| Prepaid expenses | | 370.40 |
| *Total Assets* | | $32,327.68 |
| *Liabilities* | | |
| Accounts payable | | 1,055.45 |
| Balance, December 31, 1935 | | $31,272.23 |
| **Special Funds** | | |
| *Assets* | | |
| Cash Uninvested: | | |
| Endowment Fund | .. | |
| Reserve Fund | $5,606.82 | $5,606.82 |
| Securities—(Endowment and Reserve Funds) at book value | 178,063.45 | |
| Mortgages at book value | 126,950.93 | 305,014.38 |
| Accounts and notes receivable | 12,993.91 | |
| Less:—Reserve for amount doubtful of collection | 280.29 | 12,653.62 |
| *Liabilities* | | 000.00 |
| Balance, December 31, 1935 | | $323,274.82 |
| *Total Net Asset Value General Fund and Special Funds* | | $354,547.05 |

The Society's fiscal condition showed improvement during 1935. Members and donors contributed $85,685.97, or $1,752.12 more than they gave in 1934. This is the second consecutive year since 1929 that members and donors have given more than they did the previous twelve months. Needless to say, the Board of Directors and members of the Society's staff are most grateful for the continued concern and generosity which these contributions signify. There was also an increase of $10,200.04 in receipts from the sale of publications, subscriptions to the "Sight-Saving Review," returns on services and travel, interest and dividends

from the Reserve and Endowment Funds and other sources yielding income applicable to budget expenses.

Despite these increases, it was again necessary to use a portion of the accumulated surplus in order to meet urgent requests for service, although the amount drawn was not as large as that in 1934.

Additions to the Endowment Fund and to the Reserve Fund during 1935 aggregated $55,724.06.

On the basis of book value, the Auditor's Report for 1935 shows that the total net assets of the Society as of December 31 were $354,547.05, which compares favorably with the book value of $323,851.34 as of December 31, 1934.

The Managing Director is required by the Board to submit a detailed statement of proposed expenditures and to account for all sums spent under the budget limitations. Vouchers are on file for every expenditure. For the year ending December 31, 1935, the audit was made by Frederick Fischer, Jr.; a copy will be sent upon request to anyone wishing to make a further examination of this record of the Society's financial operations.

## Form of Bequest

I give and bequeath to the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc., a corporation created under the laws of the State of New York, the sum of.....
..... Dollars
for its corporate purposes.

## National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.

50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

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Elihu Root

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*Deceased March 12, 1936.